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Who Wears the Pants?

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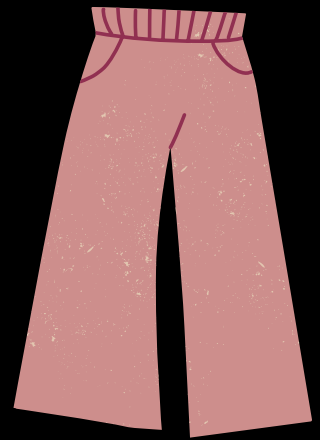
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WHO WEARS THE PANTS?

AND WHY WE SHOULD STOP ASKING THIS QUESTION



Introduction

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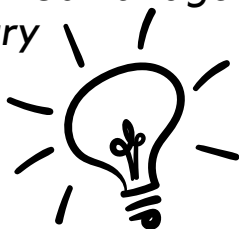
This article will explore the standard of our society when it comes to relationship between heterosexual couples and homosexual couples in relevance to our gender norms and expectations focusing in primarily on answering 'who wears the pants' or do we really need someone in to wear the pants in a relationship?



GENDER & GENDER SOCIALIZATION

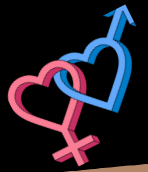
Wear the Pants

"to be the person in a relationship who is in control and who makes decisions for both people" - Cambridge Dictionary



Our society is built on the expectation that each individual should be identified as either the male and female **gender** and should adhere to their own **gender role** which refers to society's concept of how men and women are expected to act and how they should behave - given that a person identifies as a male or female. We learned gender roles through **gender socialization** wherein we are exposed to different channels while growing up on how we behave based on our gender identity. These include our own family as our parents buys us explicitly gendered toys such as Barbie for a female child and a robot for a male child, or even the way our institution was built such as the schools wherein uniforms that separates male and female students. Through gender socialization, we learned how to act utilizing the expected behaviors from our gender identity which primarily focuses on maintaining the feminine and masculine imagery.

Gender Roles Expectations

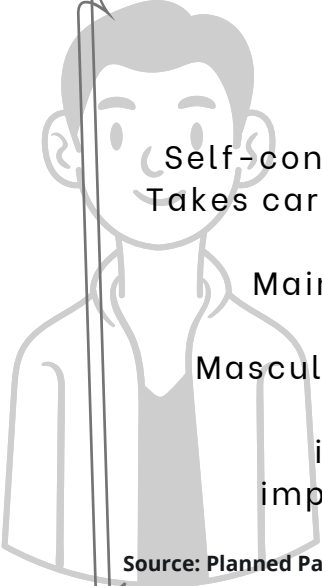


and how it plays a role in intimate relationship

From *gender socialization*, we therefore learn the gender norms and expectations that later on naturally manifest when we get into the relationship whether we realized it or not. The following examples are the typical or traditional gender expectation for men and women in an intimate relationship:

Gender Expectations

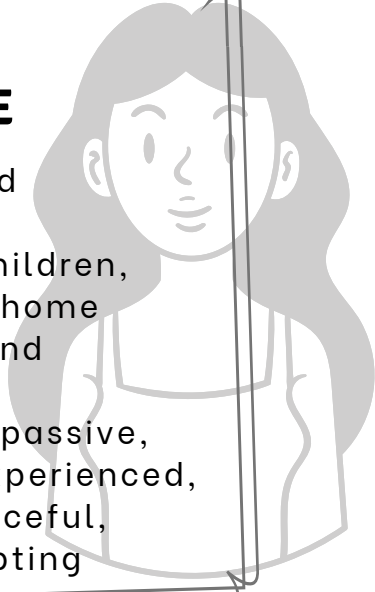
MALE



- Self-confident and aggressive
- Takes care of finances, work on the car, home repairs
- Maintain to be strong and muscular
- Masculine qualities: worldly, sexually experienced, insensitive, physically imposing, ambitious, and demanding

Source: Planned Parenthood

FEMALE

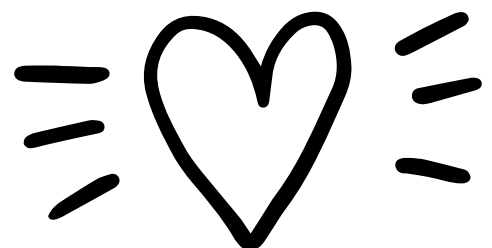


- Accommodating and emotional
- Takes care of the children, cook and clean the home
- Maintain thinness and gracefulness
- Feminine qualities: passive, naive, sexually inexperienced, soft, flirtatious, graceful, nurturing and accepting

How it plays a role in intimate relationship:

From these expectations, we could easily see the power play of dominance and submissiveness in the relationship and we can easily answer the proposed question of 'who wears the pants?' which is primarily and suspected to be the male in the relationship, traditionally speaking. When the male is branded as somebody who wears the pants it signifies that the male is the dominant in the relationship and that the female is submissive. When someone wears the pants it means they are the one doing all the decision-making in the relationship and the entire household. And from the gender expectations example above, the male gender expectations reared toward wearing the pants as it qualities promotes self-confidence while the female gender expectations expects passiveness. These gender stereotypes can easily determined on who should wear the pants in the relationship.

“Dominant gender scripts and norms are complexly intertwined with power in heterosexual relationship” (Laina Y Bay-Cheng, 2017)





CAN IT BEND GENDER
ROLES AND
STEREOTYPES?



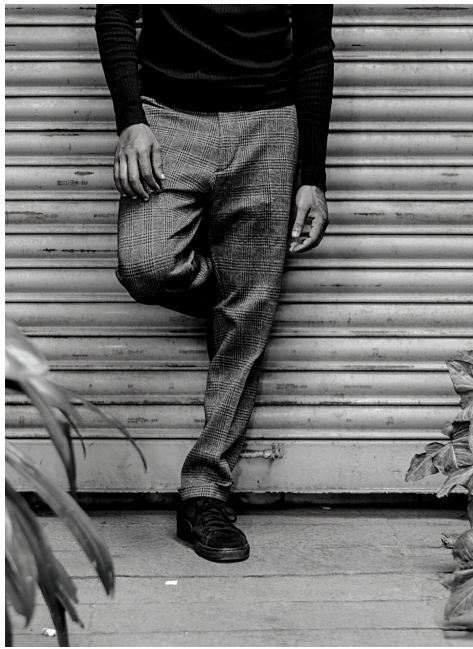
Looking back at the previous standard or traditional gender expectations for a relationship, we can easily see that these expectations are not applicable to all kinds of relationships. And same-sex couples could potentially defy the typical male and female behavior stereotypes in an intimate relationship.



However, one research found out that male same-sex marriage might struggle with power inequality due to the fact that there might still be yearning to reach out to their masculinity attributes. The study found out that **“men who do the majority of domestic work may find it more difficult to leverage power in their relationships”** (Pollitt et. al, 2018) as recalled that household chores are linked to femininity and domestic work are devalued in our society. From this study, it is easy to draw that gender norms and expectations still play a huge role in a male same-sex relationship and that the dominant power of masculinity is still attached to a biological male regardless of gender identity.

On the other note, another research conducted comparing the division of family labor between a heterosexual couple and a lesbian couple, the authors found out that **“lesbian couples were more likely to divide paid and unpaid labor evenly, whereas heterosexual couples were more likely to show specialized patterns, with husbands investing more in paid employment and wives devoting more time to unpaid family work”** (Patterson et.al, 2004). One reason that could explain why lesbian couples are more likely to divide family labors equally is due to the fact that the need for masculinity is eliminated in the relationship and that there is no need to utilize the concept of dominance and submissive in a relationship. A female gender norm that fuels the equality between lesbian couples could be the feminine characteristics such as being nurturing and avoids conflict.





IS THE PANTS NECESSARY?

The answer is no, simply because it is a social construct. The idea that someone should wear pants as necessary is part of the conservative thinking that pronounces gender roles that creates and exacerbates gender inequality in relationships. And when inequality is felt in a relationship, as one study explained that “being in the feminine role was less satisfying than being in masculine role” (Marecek, Finn, Cardell, 1984), it can impact the strength of the intimacy in a relationship as one felt less satisfied than the other and it could lead to a failed relationship. Another strong finding in the same article from the same authors is that “egalitarian or role-free relationships provide greater avenues to satisfaction than relationships that are gendered-role-typed” and it could be that there are more equal responsibilities and family labor when gender norms are not followed into the relationship. There is more room for understanding and growth when the boundaries of expected social gender behaviors are eradicated in a relationship.

**Having to
“perform”
according to
traditional
scripts limits
expressions
of
individuality
and
behaviours
– ultimately
making it
harder for
two people
to develop
true
intimacy.**

VIREN SWAMI,
BUSINESS INSIDER

bibliography.

Bay-Cheng, L. (2017, February). Who Wears the Pants: The Implications of Gender and Power for Youth Heterosexual Relationships. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499.2016.1276881>

This result from this study wherein they assessed about 395 heterosexual relationships found out that power imbalances are more problematic for women due to their male partners being abusive in regards to being dominant in the relationship. Their analysis also shows that there is no link between power and pleasure which made me think that due to the gender norm, we perceive power as linked to gender expectations of masculinity and femininity whereas pleasure comes from emotions rather than expected behaviors.

Cambridge Dictionary. (n.d.) Wear the pants. <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/wear-the-pants>

The dictionary definition of this popular idiom will help us understand the meaning of the idiom and how it applies to our society. The definition provided a direct explanation of the phrase 'wear the pants in any kind of intimate relationship. The simplicity of the definition provided by the Cambridge dictionary can easily apply the concept to any type of relationship whether it is a heterosexual or same-sex relationship.

Ceveri, L. (2020, February 13). "Who Wears the Pants" Reinforces Masculine Male Stereotypes. <https://medium.com/fearless-she-wrote/who-wears-the-pants-reinforces-masculine-male-stereotypes-2f7f8baf33ec>

This article validated my thesis question and my conclusion that there shouldn't be someone wearing pants in the relationship. The author was also able to remind me that the metaphor used in the phrase 'wearing the pants in a relationship is linked to being a man so this phrase does enact masculinity and limits the fact that men will always be branded as the dominant in relationships.

Kretchmar, J. (2011). Sociology Reference Guide Gender Roles & Equality. Gender Socialization. Gender Socialization <https://xyonline.net/sites/xyonline.net/files/2020-01/Salem%20Press%2C%20Gender%20Roles%20%26%20Equality%20%282011%29.pdf#page=45>

The author explained gender and gender socialization clearly and what are the ways we can approach analyzing gender socialization using different lenses such as social learning theory or cognitive development theory. The author also explored basic and regular exposure that is reachable for a child growing up such as declaring parents as socializing agents and peers.

Little, W. (2016). Introduction to Sociology - 2nd Canadian Edition Chapter 12. Gender, Sex, and Sexuality. <https://opentextbc.ca/introductiontosociology2ndedition/chapter/chapter-12-gender-sex-and-sexuality/#section12.2>.

This chapter of this textbook had helped me define terms such as gender, gender roles, and gender identity and how they can be related to sex and sexuality. The chapter also explores gender expectations and also talks about homosexuality and their experiences as well. The examples provided from this text were helpful in applying the concepts and definitions to the thesis topic of the paper.

bibliography.

Marecek, J. Finn, S. Cardell, M. (1982). Gender Roles in the Relationships of Lesbians and Gay Men.
https://doi.org/10.1300/J082v08n02_06

Although this is a very old article, I found the results of their study still relevant to today's time and their findings fit the progress of our society when it comes to gender roles in any type of intimate relationship. The study found out that traditional gender roles are associated with diminished satisfaction and the authors proposed why couples are experiencing this dilemma.

Patterson, C.J., Sutfin, E.L. & Fulcher, M. (2004) Division of Labor Among Lesbian and Heterosexual Parenting Couples: Correlates of Specialized Versus Shared Patterns

The authors in this research study did an analysis of comparisons between lesbians and heterosexual parenting couples exploring the division of family labor and how gender expectations play a role in the division of family labor. They found out that heterosexual couples are more inclined to follow the gender expectations norm and that lesbian couples tend to divide labor equally.

Planned Parenthood. (n.d). What are gender roles and stereotypes?

<https://www.plannedparenthood.org/learn/gender-identity/sex-gender-identity/what-are-gender-roles-and-stereotypes>

This article at Planned Parenthood distinguishes and defines gender roles and stereotypes for males and females. The article also explores how these gender stereotypes affect people and, thus, giving an insight on these can impact gender expectations in relationships. This source was very direct and informative and uses realistic examples for each gender stereotype.

Pollitt AM, Robinson BA, Umberson D. (2018, MARCH 6) GENDER CONFORMITY, PERCEPTIONS OF SHARED POWER, AND MARITAL QUALITY IN SAME- AND DIFFERENT-SEX MARRIAGES.

doi:10.1177/0891243217742110

This research study explores gender conformity between same and different-sex marriages and how the power in gender roles played out between these couples. The article found out that greater gender conformity is related to stronger perceptions of shared power in different-sex and male same-sex couples but not in female-sex couples. From their results, it can be drawn that when a male is involved, there will always be masculinity in the relationship as opposed to a female same sex-relationship wherein equality might be more valued.

Swami, V. (2016, December 11). Gender equality appears to lead to more stable relationships. Gender Equality Appears to Lead to More Stable Relationships (businessinsider.com)

The author of the article explained how we can attain gender inequality and how it can lead to a more stable relationship. Having gender equality in a relationship also leads to a lower divorce rate. It also highlights that when couples who live together are both earning the same amount of salary and sharing equally household responsibilities, there is greater intimacy and stability.